
Transportation Committee

HB 3069

Brief Description: Regulating driver improvement schools.

Sponsors: Representative Wallace.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Licensing (DOL) to regulate driver improvement schools.
- Makes the DOL responsible for compiling the driver improvement school curriculum.

Hearing Date: 2/6/08

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

In Washington, individuals may defer one moving and one non-moving violation every seven years. As a condition of this deferral, courts may impose such conditions as the court feels appropriate, which often includes attendance at a driver improvement school or traffic school. If the individual meets all of the required conditions and has not committed another infraction, the court may dismiss the infraction at the end of the deferral period.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) is responsible for overseeing the driver training school program. Driver training schools must meet standards set by the DOL, and driver training schools must be annually approved by the DOL. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) continues to set the curriculum in schools, while the Driver Instructors' Advisory Committee recommends the curriculum for the driver training schools. The advisory committee also updates the instructor certification standards, taking into consideration the standards set by OSPI.

Summary of Bill:

The licensing of driver improvement schools and instructors is under the authority of the Uniform Regulation of Business and Professions Act, giving the DOL the same authority over these groups

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as it has for other licensees. The DOL's ability to take disciplinary action for a variety of acts is also under the Uniform Regulation of Business and Professions Act, and violations of the act are misdemeanors.

The definition of "fraudulent business practices" includes a variety of practices including operating a driver improvement school without a license, making false or misleading statements in an application, failing to keep proper records, and issuing driver improvement course certificates without requiring completion of necessary training and instruction.

A driver improvement school must be inspected and its business practices reviewed prior to licensure, and a transfer of ownership requires an application to the DOL. Violations of the business practice requirements defined in the act, such as record keeping requirements, can lead to the revocation or suspension of driver improvement school or instructor licenses.

In order to qualify for an instructor's license, an applicant must meet a variety of requirements including passage of an exam and 16 hours of instruction in the improvement of drivers. Once licensed, driver instructors are required to undertake professional development according to standards set by the director, and instructor's licenses must be prominently displayed.

All staff who come into contact with students are required to undergo a criminal background check, and periodic rechecking is required.

The DOL is responsible for compiling the driver improvement school curriculum and the curriculum must include information regarding a variety of issues related to the safe operation of a motor vehicle.

The DOL is assisted in the compilation of the curriculum, certification standards, and examinations by the Driver Instructors' Advisory Committee , which is expanded by the addition of a representative from the driver improvement schools and a representative from the driver improvement school instructors.

Courses of instruction offered in high schools, vocational/technical schools, colleges, or universities are exempted from the purview of the act.

The DOL is required to submit a report to the transportation committees of the Legislature by November 1, 2008, listing proposed revisions to the act, including appropriate fees to be charged for the various DOL functions required under the act.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.